A LETTER FROM WINCHESTER,

In Answer to his Lordship's time-serving *Query*, *Whether Passive Obedience is only a Bugbear, and fit for Fools, or a Christian Duty?*

Printed by the Command of the Noble Peer.

Præstat per virtutem mori, quàm per dedicus vivere. Sen.

THis Query was delivered to me by the hands of honest *Elk*— your Lordships Secretary; and it will not be amiss in the handling of this Question, to premise the worth and beginning of *Monarchy*, which I conceive is as ancient as Time it self: for the Obedience which all Subjects (at this day) yield to Kings, is no more than the yielding of that duty which is due to the Supreme Fatherhood. *Adam*, the first Father, had not only simply Power, but Power Monarchical, as he was a Father immediately from God; for by the divine appointment, as soon as he was created, he was Monarch of the World, though he had no Subjects; And although there could not be actual Government until there were Subjects, yet by the right of Nature it was *Adam*'s due to be Supreme or Governour over all his Posterity; though not in act, yet at least in habit, he was a King from his Creation. And none doubt in the state of Innocency but that *Adam* had been Governour of all his Children; for the Integrity or Excellency of the Subjects doth not take away the Order or Eminency of the Governour. And although as long as men continued their state of Innocence, they might not need the direction of *Adam* in those things which were necessarily and morally to be done; yet in matters purely indifferent, that depended meerly on their own free wills, they might be directed by the Power of *Adam*'s Command. *Eve* was subject to *Adam* before he sinned, and the Angels, who are of a pure nature, are subject to God.

For the Dignity of *Monarchy*, these are the words of the Almighty; *By Me Kings Reign, &c.* And again (*a*) *Where the word of a King is, there is Power; and who may say unto him, what dost thou?* And holy *Job* put this Query, (*b*) *Is it fit to say to a King, Thou art wicked?* much less to expose them to violence. But this Command, (*c*) *Touch not mine Annointed*, (being uttered by the Majesty of Heaven) renders the Persons of Princes Sacred, and puts a Guard upon them; which to violate, though in our own defence, is to proclaim open War against God himself, by the breach of his Divine Command.

(a) Ec. 8.4. (b) Job 34.8 (c) 1 Ch. 16.22

And

De Benefic. lib. 7. c. 4. Ad Scapul. c. 2.

And as to the Power of Kings, *Seneca* tells us, *Ad Reges potestas omnium pertinet, ad singulos proprietas.* And *Tertullian* tells us, *Colimus Imperatorum sic quomodo & nobis licet, & ipsi expedit ut Hominem à Deo secundum, & solo Deo minorem; Hoc & ipse vult, sic enim omnibus major est, dum solo vero Deo minor est*: Kings are only in the power of God, from whom they are second, after whom first, before and above all others. And our late Bishop of *Lincoln*, in his excellent Discourse of *Popery*, p. 4. says, England *is a Monarchy, the Crown Imperial, and our Kings Supreme Governours of this Realm, and all other their Dominions, &c.* In our Oath of Supremacy we swear, *That the King is the Supreme*, so none (not the *Pope*) above him; and only Supreme, so none (not the People) co-ordinate, or equal to him.

The true Church of Christ hath always known no other Weapons to resist a Lawful Sovereign, than Prayers, Tears and Sufferings; Else why do we bear the Sign of the Cross, if we have not Courage, Christian Courage, of force enough to endure, not resist with violence, the most exquisite Tortures that can be imposed on us (upon the score of our Religion) by a lawful Authority? St. *Ambrose* receiving Imperial Command to deliver up the Churches, says, *Quid ergo turbamini? volens nunquam vos deseram, coactus repugnare non novi, dolere potero, potero flere, potero gemere: adversus arma, milites, Gothos quoq; Lachryma mea arma sunt*: If I be compelled, I may not oppose: I may grieve, I may weep, I may sigh: Against Arms, Souldiers, the *Goths* also, my Tears are my Weapons: Such are the Guards of a Priest, I neither can, nor ought to make other defence.

But to resolve one doubt by the way; Suppose a Prince should send his Officers to take away the Life of an Innocent man, how far is he bound by his Christianity not to resist? I do not believe that he is obliged to open his Breast to the Dagger: No, our Blessed Saviour tells us, it is lawful for such an one to save himself by flight, who bid his Disciples when they were persecuted in one place, to fly to another. It does as readily follow, that for his own Preservation in this Case, he may hide himself from their fury, or otherwise make all the defence for his own Life that he can, without violence; For all this while he does but hinder the Officers from doing evil, and keeps his Prince from the Guilt of Innocent Bloud, and saves himself: But whether this person (hitherto Innocent) may imbrue his hands in the Bloud of the Prince's Officers, supposing there is no other way to save his Life, but by their Deaths? And in this Case, I think he is bound (by the Rules of Christian Religion) rather to permit his own Bloud to be shed unjustly, than shed any himself, though some imagine that self-preservation in this case doth oblige him to resist, even to Bloud. For my part, I could never learn either by the Doctrine or Example of the Son of God, the Obligation of this self-preservation; for albeit self-preservation would incline a man to kill in this Case, yet I cannot find any dutiful Obligation so to do; and though we have a right by Nature to preserve our selves, yet in this case, if he suffer death, rather than resist Authority by Bloud, no man will determine that he is thereby guilty of any sin; And this is of more force, when the Innocent man considers, that he may shed Innocent Bloud; for these Officers come in Obedience to their Prince, and they may be ignorant (innocently ignorant) whether he be not an Offender that has deserved death. Moreover, if a man ought to suffer, even to death, as the Primitive Christians did when the Cause was purely Spiritual; much more ought he in all Temporal Cases. Now this (as I think) being the Case of every particular man, it is the obligation of the People too; Neither indeed can I see what Priviledges of the Subject, what Rights, what preservation of our Lives, can compound for the least Sin, unless we prefer this Life to Eternity. To suffer meekly, out of a regard to my duty, is certainly no stupidity, (as some would have it) but an excellent Virtue. Nor do I think this passive Patience, a piece of Cowardliness, or want of mettle, but rather Fortitude joyned with Meekness, to dare to endure all things, even Death it self, rather than do mischief, unless the fear of Eternal Misery be Cowardise.

Phanaticks

But

But ſome will ſay that paſſive Obedience is but a Bugbear, and fit for Fools; and the defence of it an effect of Ignorance, (which brings the reproach home to the very perſon, as well as to the Doctrines of our Bleſſed Saviour) or that ſuch paſſive Piety was more requiſite in former times, when God's Deſign was to convert the World, by ſuffering, not ſubduing; when the Seeds of Religion muſt be watered with the Bloud of Martyrs, than now in theſe purer times of Reformation. Yet we ſee *Calvin* adviſes us not to fight for Righteouſneſs: *Si ab impio & ſacrilego principe vexamur ob pietatem, ſubeat primum delictorum noſtrorum recordatio, qua talibus hanc dubio Domini flagellis caſtigantur; Inde humilitas impatientiam noſtram frenavit: Succurrat deinde hæc cogitatio, non noſtrum eſſe hujuſmodi malis mederi, hoc tantum eſſe reliquum, ut Domini opem imploremus, cujus in manu ſunt regum corda & regnorum inclinationes.* If we be perſecuted for Godlineſs, by an Impious and Sacrilegious Prince, let us firſt of all remember our Sins, which no doubt are corrected by God with Scourges; this will bridle our Impatience with humility: Then let us entertain this thought, that 'tis not our part to heal ſuch diſtempers, that this is our only remedy, to appeal to God's aſſiſtance, in whoſe hand are the Hearts of Kings, and the Inclinations of Kingdoms. And the ſame *Calvin* in another place tells us, the Prophet *Jeremiah* clearly reſolves this Queſtion: *Inſignis eſt & memorabilis apud* Jeremiam *locus, quem tametſi prolixiorem, ideo non pigebit referre, quia totam hanc queſtionem clariſſimè definit.* The words of the Prophet follow: (*viz.*) *I have given all theſe Lands into the hands of* Nebuchadnezzar *King of* Babylon. *And it ſhall come to paſs, that the Nation and Kingdom which will not ſerve the ſame* Nebuchadnezzar *King of* Babylon, *and that will not put their Neck under the Yoke of the King of* Babylon, *that Nation will I puniſh (ſaith the Lord) with the Sword, and with the Famine, and with the Peſtilence, until I have conſumed the Land: Therefore hearken not ye unto your Prophets, nor to your Diviners, and which ſpeak unto you, ſaying, Ye ſhall not ſerve the King of* Babylon, *&c:* Upon which place ſays *Calvin*, *Videmus quanta obedientia Dominus tetrum illum ferocemq; Tyrannum coli voluerit, non alia ratione niſi qui regnum obtinebat*; We ſee what obedience the Lord will have given to this wicked and fierce Tyrant; for no other reaſon, but becauſe he was a King. And *Beza* ſays as much: *Illud ſolis precibus & patientia ſanari poteſt*: The remedy againſt this Poyſon is Prayer, not Vengeance. We muſt be ſubject, for conſcience-ſake.

Char. Pop. Suc. fo. 24.

Sanguis Martyrum ſemen Eccleſiæ. Calv. Inſt. l. 4. c. 20. Art. 29.

Calv. Inſt. lib. 4.

Jer. 27. 6, 8, 9, 12.

Calv. Inſt. l. 4. c. 20. Art. 27.

Epiſt. 23. ad Peregri. Eccl. in Aug. fratres.

In a word; If it be lawful in no caſe to retaliate miſchief; If in all caſes it be virtuous to ſuffer, and the more hard the thing, the more noble the virtue, there is no difficulty in the point as to the matter of duty; the Quarrel is only betwixt Duty, and Fleſh and Bloud: When we ſay, 'tis an hard caſe, we cannot intend that 'tis hard for a Chriſtian to find his duty, if he dares do well, but rather 'tis an hard duty to endure Evil.

Our *Bleſſed Saviour* had either a Power of force enough to reſiſt (and ſo prevent) his Enemies, or he had not: No Man will be ſo impudently wicked, as to deny the firſt, or affirm the latter. It follows then, that he ſubmitted to the Death of the *Croſs*, either becauſe he deſerved to Die, or elſe becauſe he would not reſiſt the Authority of thoſe that put him to Death: But he that knew no Sin, deſerved no Puniſhment; and when he then Suffers, it is on the ſcore of paſſive Obedience. Hence it is Evident, that this ſort of paſſive Piety is no *Chimæra*, but a neceſſary duty, to be practiſed by ſuch as dare imitate the example of the *Lamb of God*. The denyal of this Doctrine renders *Chriſt*'s Paſſion and his *Holy Goſpel* light and frivolous, meer *Enthuſiaſme* and *Impoſture*. And although our Saviour did ſuffer for the Sins of Man-kind, and it was neceſſary that he ſhould die, yet he himſelf deſerved no Puniſhment; And tho' the *Romane* Authority had power of his Life: (to which he ſubmitted) Yet that cannot excuſe the ſentence of his Judge from being rigid and unjuſt. Every Majeſtrate that dares Pronounce an unjuſt Judgment, muſt certainly be accountable, to the All-righteous Judge. But we muſt leave our Innocence to be revenged till then,

and

and in the mean time; In all things submit our selves to our Superiors, for the Lords sake.

And lastly, if we should lay aside the duty, *Argumentum ab inconvenienti* may prevail; for it is much better for the people to suffer a great deal of Cruelty, than to rise up in Arms, and overthrow the Government. I remember *Livy's*, *Nec morbum ferre possumus, nec remedium.* Never yet was any Rebellion free from the guilt of powring out a great deal of Innocent Bloud, besides the many mighty Injuries and Oppressions that must inevitably fall upon the heads of a great number of men. So that we had much better, with patience, suffer the present Calamities, than endure worse, and bring by our means much worse upon others; closing with the wholsom advice of *Tacitus*: *Ferenda Regum ingenia, neq; usui esse crebras mutationes, vitia crunt donec homines, sed neq; hæc continua, & meliorum interventu pensantur.*

Of which the Promoters and Prosecutors are deeply Guilty.

Annal 12.

And now, my Lord, your sufferings have been highly eminent and notorious to the whole World; You suffered your self to be transported by the Zeal of Fanaticism, to raise Arms against our late Martyr'd Sovereign, and afterwards (as far as in you lay) you did strangely suffer the King's Head to be cut off, and then with meekness you did suffer the deserved reproaches of the People for that most abominable Fact.

You suffered your self to be loaden with heavy burdens of Places of Trust and Confidence to that Cruel and Bloudy Tyrant *Oliver*; You suffered your self (even actively) to be concerned with those Rebels in rooting up the Monarchy, and in imposing the worst of Cruelties on the King's Party. In a word, your Sufferings of the late Times after this rate, are matchless and innumerable.

You suffered your self; when you could not help it, and for the sake of *VARIETY*, (your Lordships Motto) to be a little concerned in the Kings Restauration, you then soon suffered your self (by the contrivances of a cursed *Hypocrisie*) to be thrust into the Kings favour, and who so great as your little Lordship? you suffered your self, after all, to be ungrateful; and herein you suffered your self to be cryed out against, as the greatest Villain upon the face of the Earth; You unluckily suffered your self to advise his Majesty to shut up the *Exchequer*, to break the *Triple League*, To divide the *Fleet*, *&c.* You suffered your self to be blowed upon by the stinking breath of the Rabble; which swelled you into a Popularity; you have likewise suffered your self to be Poysoned by the Venom of Hellish *Plots*; and you now Vomit forth nothing but *Devils*! and *Hell*! and *Damnation*! *Sedition in Speeches*, and *Treason* in *Trieks* and *Devices*.

Amidst all these Notorious instances of your Lordships passive Patience, there is none to be reckoned of more note than this, that you have hitherto suffered (as is verily believed) much against your own Inclinations this King to wear his Crown and Royal Head; Notwithstanding they talk of 60000 Men ready to force the King to comply with his Parliament; or else to bring him to the Block. And in many other things of the greatest moment you have suffered in these times; Which when time shall discover, if your Lordship should suffer your Head to be Chopt off! O! the cryes of the *PARTY*!

Væ nobis Infamis!

LONDON: Printed for ALLEN BANKS. 1681.